

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) Individualized intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers comprising cellulose fibers reacted with an effective amount of a polycarboxylic acid crosslinking agent in the presence of from about 1% to about 10 % of the weight of the cellulose fiber of a C₄-C₁₂ polyol to form intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers characterized by Whiteness Index, (WI_{CDM-L}) greater than about 69 and an *L* value greater than about 94.5; and wherein said Whiteness Index (WI_{CDM-L}) of said fibers is measured after curing at a temperature of from about 182°C to about 215°C.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Original) The fibers of Claim 1 having an *a* value greater than about -1.55 and less than about -0.60.

4. (Original) The fibers of Claim 1 having a *b* value less than about 8.50.

5. (Currently amended) The fibers of Claim 1 wherein the polycarboxylic acid crosslinking agent is an α -hydroxy polycarboxylic acid.

6. (Currently amended) The fibers of Claim 5 wherein the α -hydroxy polycarboxylic crosslinking agent is selected from the group consisting of malic acid, tartaric acid, citric acid, tartronic acid, α -hydroxyglutaric acid, and citramalic acid and mixtures thereof.

7. (Original) The fibers of claim 6 wherein the crosslinking agent is citric acid.

8. (Original) The fibers of Claim 6 wherein the crosslinking agent is malic acid.

9. (Original) The fibers of Claim 6 wherein the crosslinking agent is tartaric acid.

10. (Original) The fibers of Claim 1 wherein the polyol is selected from the group consisting of acyclic polyols, alicyclic polyols, and heterosides and mixtures thereof.

11. (Original) The fibers of Claim 10 wherein the acyclic polyol is selected from the group consisting of erythritol, xylitol, arabinitol, ribitol, sorbitol, mannitol, perseitol and volemitol and mixtures thereof.

12. (Original) The fibers of Claim 11 wherein the acyclic polyol is sorbitol.

13. (Original) The fibers of Claim 10 wherein the alicyclic polyol is myo-inositol.
14. (Original) The fibers of Claim 10 wherein the heteroside is maltitol.
15. (Original) The fibers of Claim 10 wherein the heteroside is lactitol.
16. (Original) The fibers of Claim 1 having a brightness greater than about 79.0% ISO.
17. (Canceled).
18. (Canceled).
19. (Original). The fibers of Claim 1 wherein the polyol is present from about 2% to about 6% of the weight of cellulose fiber.
20. (Currently amended). The fibers of Claim I wherein the wet bulk is 16 ~~g/ee~~ cc/g or greater.